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SIPDIS

ADDIS ABABA FOR AU AMBASSADOR COURVILLE

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [KEAI](#) [XW](#)

SUBJECT: SECOND FRIENDS OF EASBRIG MEETING SHOWS CONTINUED
DONOR INTEREST

REF: A. USADAO NAIROBI 271341Z MAY 08

[1](#)B. 07 NAIROBI 4749

[1](#)1. This is an action message. Action request at para 11.

Summary

[1](#)2. The Eastern African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) hosted its second "Friends of EASBRIG" meeting on May 22 (ref B described the first). The meeting was notable for its increased participation and the level of detail EASBRIG was able to provide in terms of their progress toward meeting the eight goals on its strategic plan. As one of five standby forces in the African Union (AU), EASBRIG is doing comparatively well in terms of its development and organization, but much more work needs to be done if it is to be operational by 2010 as mandated by the AU. The Government of Kenya on May 23 formally signed a host agreement for the EASBRIG Coordinating Mechanism (EASBRICOM), but the EASBRICOM Director noted that it would take at least another year or two before EASBRIG's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would become a pact to be endorsed and ratified by the governments of member states. The "Friends" agreed that they need to harmonize assistance to the organization, and agreed to reconvene on the margins of the June G8 meeting (NFI) in Addis Ababa. U.S. support to EASBRIG is limited by the absence of a Presidential Determination, but support in the form of bilateral assistance to EASBRIG member countries and regional institutions does provide an avenue for support.
End Summary.

New "Friends" Join Old "Friends"
to Discuss EASBRIG's Progress

[1](#)3. On May 22, the Eastern African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) hosted its second "Friends of Easbrig" meeting, inviting donor countries, universities, and NGOs alike. The meeting was joined by both old friends (i.e, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the UK, U.S., South Africa, the EU, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), the Freidrich Ebert Shiftung, and the Institute for Security Studies), but also some new friends, including Finland, the Hans Seidel Foundation, the Nordic Battle Group, and the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade for Operations (SHIRBRIG). (Note: Japan and Russia

were invited and are interested in contributing to EASBRIG but were not in attendance. There was also a name plate at the meeting table for China, but their Political Counselor later told us that they had not received the invitation. End Note.) The U.S. was represented by Acting PolCouns, Deputy DATT, and CJTF-HOA (including CJTF's HOA's USAU liaison officer).

¶4. Simon Mulongo, the Director of the EASBRIG Coordination Mechanism (EASBRICOM), gave the group an overview of the progress made toward the organization's ambitious eight-point strategic plan. The organization, he noted, has got to start out at a run in order to meet the African Union (AU) deadline of operationalization by 2010. Member states are starting to pay their annual dues, and two meetings in March -- one for Chiefs of Defense Staff in Comoros, and the other for Ministers of Security and Defense in Kampala -- helped solidify regional support. The eight points are noted below:

- The existence of cohesive political structures that can mandate and oversee EASBRIG
- Establishment of a Command, Control, and Communications mechanism by the end of 2008
- Initial operational capability of one standby brigade by 2010
- Police element on standby by the end of 2010
- Roster of trained civilians available for deployment by the end of 2010
- The development of a logistic system that can sustain the force by 2010
- Integrated regional training system in place by the end of

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2010

- Efficient (and adequately resourced) administrative structures to support EASBRIG

¶5. While there has been progress on some fronts (a harmonized policy framework is finished, the standby headquarters staff has been identified, a Norwegian police advisor and a civilian planning officer are both in place), there is still work to be done in others (finalizing the mandate process, finding funding for upcoming training events and other standup needs).

Regionally Speaking,
EASBRIG is On Track

¶6. In comparison to other standby forces in the African Union, Mulongo explained, EASBRIG is doing well. While the Economic Community of West African States' standby force predates any other in the AU, they are not organized according to the new AU standards. In fact, EASBRIG personnel are scheduled to evaluate ECOWAS's Command Post Exercise scheduled for August/September 2008, Mulongo said. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) conducted command post and field exercises in Chad and the Central African Republic last year, but they need to revisit their structure now in light of new AU requirements. They are setting their sights on next year and are looking to EASBRIG for guidance, Mulongo said. The South African Development Community's standby force (SADC) still lacks a standing headquarters element but their memorandum of understanding (MOU) was finally signed in August 2007, far after EASBRIG's was done. Finally, the North African Standby Brigade has not yet completed its MOU (three of eight members have signed). While the organization's headquarters are in Libya, they are still operating out of a hotel.

More Formalized Agreement
Still A Way Off for EASBRIG

¶7. In response to a question from Acting PolCouns about the prospects for strengthening EASBRIG's existing MOU into something more substantial, Mulongo said that EASBRIG's intent is to move eventually from an MOU to a pact, which would be endorsed and ratified by governments (as opposed to heads of state, which is the basis of the current MOU). He said that forward movement on EASBRIG's status must happen only when the level of comfort among member states is reached. Mulongo estimated that the next step would not be taken for at least a year or two.

¶8. Mulongo highlighted, however, that the Government of Kenya was scheduled to sign the EASBRICOM host agreement on May 23, formalizing the organization's headquarters arrangement. (Note: The Government of Kenya has previously signed a hosting agreement for EASBRIG's Planning Element. The new hosting agreement for EASBRICOM was indeed signed as scheduled by Foreign Minister Moses Wetangula on May 23. End Note.)

Donors Want to Harmonize Support

¶9. After Mulongo's presentation of current and future EASBRIG needs, the focus shifted to each of the "Friends" who, in turn, described their level of support to EASBRIG. (Note: For a summary of donor support to EASBRIG, see ref A. End Note.)

Acting PolCouns reiterated U.S. bilateral support to EASBRIG member states, to the International Peace Support Training Center, and through CJTF-HOA liaison officers. She also noted that the requisite legal authority to support EASBRIG more systematically had still not been approved in Washington. In the meantime, however, the U.S. would continue to provide support through existing legal mechanisms.

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¶10. After the donor presentation, donors discussed the need to harmonize their support. With the as-yet-unfunded Command Post Exercise scheduled for November, the group agreed to organize the next "Friends" meeting in Addis Ababa in early June (date TBD) on the margins of the G8 meeting (NFI) to discuss progress on donor commitments and to harmonize efforts. Alternate venues for the next regular "Friends" meeting, scheduled for November 2008, were discussed, including Djibouti and Addis Ababa. There seemed to be consensus around holding the next meeting in Nairobi to coincide with the command post exercise so that the "Friends" could see EASBRIG's Planning Element at work.

¶11. Post has been in contact with AF/RSA regarding the limitations to/possibilities of supporting EASBRIG in the absence of an appropriate Presidential Determination (PD). Post has also sent via diplomatic pouch a collection of EASBRIG founding documents to aid in deciding whether a PD is warranted at this time. Post will forward to AF/RSA via e-mail EASBRIG's detailed strategic plan, including specific requests for assistance. ACTION REQUEST: Please advise on potential areas for U.S. engagement/support for EASBRIG, including routing support through other legal mechanisms, such as the AU (which was authorized in a 2004 PD to receive defense articles and services under the Foreign Assistance Act).

RANNEBERGER